

Dear Senator Moore

I write to express my concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

I had the privilege of birthing my son, now 12 months old, in a Birth Centre in St George Hospital, Kogarah. I was lucky enough to have the continuity of care of a midwife throughout my pregnancy and for 2 weeks of home visits post birth. The bond I developed with my midwife was an integral part of my positive birthing experience and I believe it was directly responsible for my discharge from hospital less than 2 days post birth and my successful breastfeeding. I fully intend to birth my second child at home and am horrified that legislation may deny me that right. I fear that Home birthing may be forced underground and result in more freebirthing and pose a danger to both mothers and babies who wish to birth at home. I am also flabbergasted that birthing services for rural women, who may not be within easy reach of hospitals, may be compromised or become unnecessarily stressful.

Yours sincerely

Rachael Stott